

ALPHABET SOUP



FQPA, FIFRA, 2(ee), 24(c), S18, 25(b), TRAC, SAP, PDP, ETC.

An EPA Region 4 pesticides information update to inform regulators, organizations, and the interested public about the Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA), sustainable agriculture projects, and FIFRA registration actions and policy. Editor: Lora Lee Schroeder, Life Scientist

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NC Peanut Farmers Explore Alternatives to Organophosphate Pesticides

By Scott Marlowe, Executive Director, North Carolina Peanut Project

Editor's Note: The NC Peanut Project is funded, in part, by a Region 4 Agricultural Initiative grant.

The NC Peanut Project began in 1995 as a program of the Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA, a non-profit organization which focuses on issues of equity, diversity, and sustainability in agriculture and rural communities. The focus of the Peanut Project is to assist peanut farmers in getting ahead of the changes that will affect the peanut industry and agriculture in general, in a way that improves the economic, environmental, and social impact of agriculture. Our main target has been to reduce the need for chemical pesticides, using informal learning situations, farmer-run research, and farmer-to-farmer information sharing. Since the program's inception, more than 60 farmers have participated in Peanut Project field trials, testing and

adapting bio-rational methods of peanut production, and many more have attended Peanut Project meetings to hear the results of the trials. In 1998, Peanut Project farmers reduced their use of chemical pesticides from 1994 levels by more than 106,000 pounds of active ingredient, on more than 7,800 acres, independent of seasonal pesticide use fluctuation. Eighty five percent of the participating growers increased their profit, and most reported no yield reduction. Meetings have given farmers the opportunity to share with other farmers, land grant faculty, extension agents, members of the non-governmental organization (NGO) community, and others from the peanut industry their experiences and challenges in keeping their farms operating. These new relationships have helped all of the collaborators do their jobs more effectively.

The challenges facing farmers as we approach the next century are taking an immediacy that requires quick action. As one grower stated at a Peanut Project meeting, "I don't have ten years to wait for them to

figure out this stuff. I need the information now." The only way for growers to have access to information quickly is for them to participate in generating the information. Several trends are increasing the pressures on farmers and making it more difficult to stay on the land. Federal commodity programs are being dismantled. International trade agreements like the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) are increasing competition from the world market. Consumers are demanding reduction of pesticides used on food, and legislators are responding with increased regulation and legislation limiting pesticide use.

Organizations such as the Cooperative Extension Service and the Agricultural Research Service, which have traditionally provided new options for farmers, are facing budget cuts from both the federal and state levels which erode their effectiveness. All of these pressures rest squarely on the shoulders of the farmer. If farms are to survive, there must be new approaches and a new sense of

urgency. Increasingly, growers are saying, "I can't go on like this. Something has got to change."

This urgency is at the heart of the Peanut Project. The solutions which will help growers stay on the farm will be found on the farm. Each member of the agricultural community can contribute to solving the puzzle. The test at the end of the day is whether or not farmers, their farms, and their families are healthier as a result of our work.

Note: For further information and to receive a copy of the report, The Peanut Project: Farmer-focused agricultural innovation for sustainable peanut production, which outlines both the model of agricultural innovation used in the project and the specific strategies for reducing pesticides and other costs in peanut production, send \$6.00 US in check or money order to;

The Peanut Project

RAFI-USA

PO Box 640

Pittsboro, NC 27312 USA.

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Region 4 on the Road with FQPA

Region 4 Pesticide Program staff have been busy doing public outreach on FQPA.

Commercial Pesticide Applicator Training in Gwinnett County, GA:

Staff spoke to commercial pesticide applicators at a training meeting in Gwinnett County, Georgia sponsored by the Georgia Cooperative Extension Service which was broadcast to 12 satellite locations. While applicators were understandably nervous about the implications of the FQPA on their business operations, they expressed a desire to find alternatives to more toxic pesticides. Applicators were

reminded of the importance of following the label directions and to review labels frequently. Also, they were told that one of the likely outcomes of FQPA will be changes in pre-harvest intervals and application rates for the OP's.

NPIRS Conference in SC

At a meeting of the National Pesticide Information Retrieval System (NPIRS) in Hilton Head, S.C., participants were shown a video entitled, "Leading the Way," showcasing best management practices in the Mississippi Delta. The video is a product of an ongoing Agricultural Initiative project funded by EPA Region 4 in Mississippi called Delta F.A.R.M. (Farmers Advocating Resource Management). The video won the 1998 National Ag-Marketing Association Competition. Clips from the video, according to Trey Cooke, the Executive Director of the project, were shown on Ag Day, a nationally syndicated agricultural news show in Memphis, TN. The clips from the video also received Merit Honors at the Region 5 Best of NAMA Competition in the Television News category.

EPA Region 1 FQPA Conference in Massachusetts

A lively discussion on risk management under FQPA was held at the EPA Region 1 FQPA Conference in Westbury, Massachusetts on March 3, 1999, led by Lora Lee Schroeder of EPA Region 4 and Evelyn Washington of the EPA Headquarters Office of Water.

The subject least understood and most controversial seemed to be the EPA use of the one half of the level of detection calculation, where no measurable residues were detected but the pesticide was applied to the crop. Participants had difficulty understanding why, "zero was not zero," under these circumstances. A

number of questions were asked regarding how EPA will do the cumulative risk assessment required by FQPA. Participants expressed concern that minor uses would be canceled first by registrants for economic reasons and reduction of risks. The issue of a "fair playing field" with respect to imports was also a matter of concern to the participants.

Fear was expressed that farmers in other countries would have access to pesticides that are unavailable to American farmers and that if residues could not be detected then the food would be legally allowed in the U.S. It was agreed that questions that could not be answered as part of the discussion would be directed to EPA HQ for response.

Tidbits :

Question: Why are children more vulnerable to pesticide exposure?
Answer: Their internal organs are still developing and, in relation to their body weight, they eat more than adults, and they can have greater exposure due to mouthing objects and the amount they eat.

Region 4 Pesticide Stewardship Committee Talks Agromedicine

Sam Caldwell, Project Director for the South Carolina Agromedicine Program, was one of the featured speakers at the Region 4 Pesticide Stewardship Committee Meeting on March 31, 1999. The SC Agromedicine Program, begun in 1984, provides a variety of services such as training health care professionals, answering public inquiries and providing educational materials to the public. All third-year family medicine residents at the Medical University of SC participate in the Agromedicine training program for one month.

An interesting fact mentioned during his presentation was the number of cases reported regarding imported

fire ant (IFA) stings, identified by a survey of primary care physicians in South Carolina. There were an estimated 33,000 patients who sought medical consultation or treatment for IFA stings in South Carolina during 1998.

Caldwell provided the committee with a copy of the recently compiled manual, Ag-Med: The Rural Practitioner's Guide to Agromedicine. "Ag-Med" is a first-of-its-kind, handy guide for the treatment of agriculture-related disease and injury. Some 1500 copies of the manual already have been distributed.

Judy Hartley, a Registered Nurse and director of the Georgia Healthy Farmer Project, a program of the Georgia Department of Human Resources Division of Public Health Division, spoke about the difficulties of starting a farm health program in rural communities. She emphasized the importance of gaining acceptance in the community, which requires a long term commitment. After six years in existence, the Georgia Healthy Farmer Project is just now beginning to gain strong community support, according to Hartley. Ms. Hartley attributes part of their success to grass roots support and, in particular, to lobbying on their behalf by the Georgia Farm Bureau.

Of 10 similar programs initially piloted nationally, Georgia's program is the only one that continues to operate. Georgia's program is funded with State dollars.

The project now has three years of data gathered from doctors' offices, pharmacists, chiropractors, extension agents, farmers and farm families with respect to injuries suffered on the farm, including pesticide injuries. Hartley told the committee that they have discovered that farmers and family members often do not go to the hospital unless a problem is very serious, since many

are self-insured or have no insurance.

One very successful method the project has found to change behavior is through children's farm safety camps. Children who attend these camps learn safety skills such as how to swim, tractor safety, CPR, and understanding pesticides. This idea has been expanded nationally by the Progressive Farmer Day Camps.

Hartley also mentioned the involvement of one of the project nurses with pesticide container recycling in Georgia. Nancy Fussell was an early proponent of pesticide container recycling. She uses the container recycling project as an opportunity to work with farmers and others who use pesticides to ensure the proper use of personal protective clothing.

OTHER EPA REGIONS

Michigan Briefing on Agricultural Initiative Project.

By Barbara Naess, EPA Region 5

On February 26, Brian Rowe of the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Mark Whalon of Michigan State University briefed Marcia Mulkey and other EPA HQ Office of Pesticide Programs staff on the progress of the Michigan use/usage and residue data collection project. They presented drafts of the two crop profiles (for grapes and asparagus) and data tracking residues on commodities with known pesticides through the processing process. Headquarters staff expressed optimism about the potential uses of the data. Project coordinators hope that this systematic approach to gathering real world data will provide a model for supplying assessment and mitigation process. (For more information contact Brian Rowe:

<roweb@state.mi.us>

Region 5 Expands Ag Expertise with New Hire

Barbara Naess joins EPA Region 5 to coordinate Ag Initiative/FQPA activities. Barbara holds a Bachelors's degree in Ecological Agriculture from Evergreen State College and a Master's degree in International Agricultural Development from University of California Davis. Her experience includes conducting research on bean resistance to nematodes in California, agroforestry and community gardening extension in East and West Africa, and participatory on-farm research on the use of cover crops to improve soil fertility in Guatemala. In her previous job, Barbara coordinated an agricultural production and education program for a non-profit organization in Guatemala. Welcome Barbara! (Source: John Ward, EPA Region 5)

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EPA HEADQUARTERS:

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OP Pesticide Use Information Posted on the Internet

Detailed use information by crop is now available on the Internet in a draft form to allow growers and others an opportunity to review and comment. This information can be viewed on EPA's web site at:

<www.epa.gov/oppbead1/matrices>

The 10 crops now available on the Web are apples, brussels sprouts, peaches, pears, oats/rye, rice, sorghum, soybeans, sugarcane, and tomatoes. EPA will use the data in its reassessment of existing tolerances (residue limits) for pesticides in food. (Source: EPA Press Advisory dated March 15, 1999)

EPA's Report Card on Tolerance Reassessments

According to Susan Wayland, EPA Acting Assistant Administrator, EPA expects to surpass the FQPA goal of reassessing one-third of existing tolerances by August 1999. To date, of the 9,728

tolerances subject to reassessment, EPA has reassessed about 2,400 tolerances, of which about 1,500 or about 63% are for OP's, carbamates, organochlorines, and carcinogenic pesticides. EPA expects to reassess approximately 1,000 more tolerances by August to surpass the 33 % goal. These will consist of reassessments

from tolerance revocations, reregistrations, and registration actions. (Source: EPA Letter to Congressman Waxman dated February 22, 1999)

EPA Releases Manual, "Recognition and Management of Pesticide Poisonings"

The newly released manual provides healthcare professionals with information on the health hazards of pesticides and recommendations for managing poisonings and injuries. The fifth edition introduces a new chapter on the importance of medical professionals conducting complete patient histories to help ensure proper diagnosis and treatment. The manual is available through the Office of Pesticide Programs' Certification and Worker Protection Branch and is accessible at:

<www.epa.gov/pesticides/safety/healthcare>.

ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

Organic food is, "exploding out of the niche market and into the mainstream," according to retailers in Europe and the U.S. In the U.S. alone there were sales of more than \$4 billion in 1997. Most European countries, with the exception of Britain, France and Greece, pay organic farmers an annual subsidy for as long as they agree not to use artificial fertilizers and pesticides, and intensive farming techniques.

(Source: "The Christian Science Monitor," Wednesday, March 24, 1999)

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What's Organic?

An organic farmer uses soil, insects, plants, microorganisms, animals, and humans to create a coherent and stable whole. A farm's production is integrated, humane, and environmentally sustainable.

(Source: Welsh Institute of Rural Studies, University of Wales)

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

*Consumer's Union Issues Report on Pesticides in Food

The Consumer's Union issued a report in February entitled, Do you know what you are eating? An analysis of U.S. Government data on pesticide residues in foods. The study analyzed data collected by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's pesticide Data Program (PDP) to compare the relative amounts and toxicity of pesticide residues in different foods. Amounts of pesticide residues on foods were ranked according to a toxicity index.

At the time of the report, EPA was already involved with an extensive scientific review to reevaluate the risks of pesticides mentioned in the report, as required by the Food Quality Protection Act. The Agency believes the approach devised with assistance and advice of the Tolerance Reassessment Advisory Committee is

credible, transparent, and responsible. It involves public review of risk assessments and the opportunity to suggest risk management approaches.

Meanwhile, the EPA continues to emphasize that the benefits of the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables outweigh any short term risks posed by exposures to pesticides in food. (Note: to read the entire report visit the Consumer's Union Site at <<http://www.consunion.org/>>) (Source: EPA Press Office)

WEB SITES TO CHECK OUT :

Note: These web sites contain information expressing a variety of opinion and perspective. They are not necessarily the opinions of EPA or the author but are nevertheless important to a balanced understanding of FQPA and issues pertaining to sustainable agriculture.

EPA WEB SITE

"Status Summary" of the Organophosphates:

<www.epa.gov/pesticides/op>

AGROMEDICINE SITES

South Carolina Agromedicine Program

<aaa.musc.edu/oem/ahome.html>

YOUR COMMENTS

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“In your Feb 99 “Alphabet Soup”—which by the way is excellent, I was struck by the Delta FARM article on environmental stewardship. Many farmers and landholders practice or at least would like to practice stewardship of this ilk. Does this program offer any funding to establish filter strips, wildlife plantings, or perhaps install closed system pesticide handling capacity,

etc.? Sometimes a little \$ can help folks do what they already see as the right thing.”

Dan Horton, Extension Entomology,
Univ. Of Georgia.

COMMENTS BY THE AUTHOR

If readers, have comments or suggestions for this newsletter they would be gratefully received.

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